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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 002708

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PO](#)
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH PORTUGUESE FORMIN AMADO

REF: A. LISBON 2698
[1](#)B. LISBON 2689

Classified By: POL/ECON COUNSELOR RICHARD REITER FOR REASONS 1.4 B,D.

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. Ambassador Stephenson met with Portuguese Foreign Minister Amado November 13 and touched on a range of key topics. Amado is laying the political groundwork for an increase in Portugal's contribution to ISAF in Afghanistan, but new boots are unlikely to hit the ground before early [1](#)2010. Portugal understands our views on Russia but is following the EU lead. Amado does not see the Community of Democracies as a top priority and is waiting to see the approach taken by the new US administration. END SUMMARY.

LAYING GROUNDWORK FOR ISAF INCREASE

[1](#)2. (C) In a wide-ranging talk on November 13, Foreign Minister Luis Amado told Ambassador Stephenson he is laying the political groundwork within the GOP for future increases in Portugal's contribution to NATO's ISAF mission in Afghanistan. Amado was recently quoted in the press saying Portugal would consider such an increase "if asked", so he clarified that such a commitment could come only after Portugal's autumn 2009 elections, with deployment notionally in early 2010. Amado speculated that a new contribution could include a medical unit or a national guard police unit (the latter in a training capacity), but he was more focused on getting political approval for a deployment than on what mix of troops might be deployed.

AFRICOM - BASING NOT A GOP CONCERN

[1](#)3. (C) Following last week's visit to Lisbon of AFRICOM Deputy to the Commander Amb. Mary Carlin Yates (ref A), Amado noted that the GOP does not have expectations that AFRICOM or its components will be based in Portugal. Amado agreed that the real push for this has come from the Regional Government of the Azores, which sees such a mission as potentially breathing new life into Lajes Air Base in the Azores.

EU/RUSSIA - FOLLOW THE LEADER

[1](#)4. (C) In response to Ambassador's restating the US position on the importance of EU and transatlantic unity towards Russia, FM Amado commented that while Russia had made serious mistakes in Georgia, including recognizing the separatist regions, Portugal agrees with the EU position on the need to work with Moscow. Amado also said he thinks there is some "ambiguity" in the Sarkozy/Medvedev agreement --which sounds like a prepared justification for allowing talks with Russia to go forward. As we reported in ref B, Portugal is not likely to take a hard line towards Russia absent EU consensus to do so.

COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES

[1](#)5. (C) In response to Ambassador's question about the level

of Portugal's ambitions for its 2008-2009 chairmanship of the Community of Democracies, Amado replied frankly that it has not been a high priority for the GOP, and he will wait to see what signals he gets from the new US administration. Portugal has scheduled a CD Summit for July 2009 in Lisbon but has done little else during its tenure, despite our continuous prodding.

U.S. TRANSITION

16. (C) Amado commented that he understands that the new US administration is unlikely to bring dramatic shifts in foreign policy, but he believes that a change in style in Washington will create different perceptions in Europe that will serve the new administration well and enhance its credibility among its allies. Amado believes that to restore respect and credibility for our military might, we need to demonstrate anew our capacity for negotiation and diplomacy, and he hopes an Obama Administration can do so.

17. (C) We have heard that Amado is likely to step down from his post in autumn 2009 when national elections herald a new Portuguese government -- despite the fact that the current Socialist government of PM Socrates looks poised to do well in the elections.
STEPHENSON